Gestational Diabetes

What is Gestational Diabetes?
It is a type of diabetes that happens during pregnancy. Having diabetes means the amount of sugar (glucose) in your blood is higher than it should be.

Gestational diabetes usually:
- Develops in the second half of pregnancy
- Goes away soon after your baby is born

What Causes Gestational Diabetes?
Your growing baby and changes in your hormone levels in pregnancy affect how your body manages sugar. Your body is unable to make enough of a hormone called insulin. Insulin helps your body to control the amount of sugar in your blood.

Why Is It Important to Keep Your Blood Sugars in Target?
If your blood sugars are not well controlled during pregnancy, you and your baby are at risk of a complicated delivery. Also, the baby is at greater risk of being overweight and developing diabetes later in life.

The Good News: Gestational Diabetes Can Be Managed
By keeping your blood sugars in the target range, you can expect to have a healthy baby and a safe labour and delivery.

What Can You Do For a Healthy Pregnancy?
Enjoy a Healthy Diet:
This will help you manage your blood sugars and provide the best nutrients for you and your growing baby
- Select from all of the food groups each day
  - Vegetables and Fruit
  - Grains and Starches
  - Milk and Alternatives
  - Meat and Alternatives
Choose moderate amounts of carbohydrate at each meal or snack
  - Carbohydrates are found in fruit, grains and starches, milk and yogurt

Limit foods high in sugar – cakes, cookies, candy, juice, pop and other sugary drinks

Spread out your food by eating smaller meals and snacks spaced evenly through the day

Choose foods high in fibre – whole grains, lentils and beans

Low calorie or very low carbohydrate diets are not recommended. They do not provide enough nutrients for you and your baby.

Plan a Healthy Weight Gain:

The amount of weight gain will vary depending on your weight at the start of your pregnancy. Weight loss is not recommended.

Be Active Each Day:

Regular physical activity can help control your blood sugars. Talk to your doctor about the right type and amount of activity for you.

Test Your Blood Sugars at Home:

Checking and recording your blood sugars will help you and your diabetes team manage your gestational diabetes.
Take Insulin if Needed

For some women, healthy eating and physical activity are not enough to control blood sugars. Insulin injections may be needed during pregnancy. Insulin will keep blood sugars in a healthy range. This will help to keep you and your baby in good health. Insulin will be discontinued after pregnancy in most cases.

Getting Support

It is natural to have a lot of questions and concerns if you are diagnosed with gestational diabetes. Once your doctor has confirmed that you have gestational diabetes, you should be referred to a specialized diabetes program where you will deliver your baby.

The health care team at the diabetes program includes nurses, dietitians and endocrinologists who will work closely with you to manage your diabetes and to help you have a healthy pregnancy.

What to Expect if You are Referred to the Halton Diabetes Program

If you are referred to the Halton Diabetes Program, you may attend a 2 hour group education session with the dietitian to help you plan a healthy diet, discuss activity, blood sugar testing and the role of insulin. This appointment will be offered to you within 1-2 weeks of the date we receive your doctor’s referral.

After the group session, you will be seen on a regular basis in the Prenatal Clinic where your health care team will continue to support you and work with you help you have a healthy pregnancy and delivery.

Additional Resources:


This handout is for self-care. It should not be used to replace a visit with your healthcare provider. If you have questions about your personal medical situation, please call your healthcare provider.

HDP JUNE 2017